

Iraq: A War For Israel

Mark Weber

THE UNITED STATES INVASION of Iraq in March-April 2003, and the occupation of the country since then, has cost more than two thousand American lives and more than \$300 billion, and has brought death to tens of thousands of Iraqis.

Why did President Bush decide to go to war? In whose interests was it launched?

In the months leading up to the attack, President Bush and other high-ranking US officials repeatedly warned that the threat posed to the US and world by the Baghdad regime was so grave and imminent that the United States had to act quickly to bomb, invade and occupy Iraq.

On Sept. 28, 2002, for example, he said:

“The danger to our country is grave and it is growing. The Iraqi regime possesses biological and chemical weapons, is rebuilding the facilities to make more and, according to the British government, could launch a biological or chemical attack in as little as 45 minutes after the order is given... This regime is seeking a nuclear bomb, and with fissile material could build one within a year.”

On March 6, 2003, President Bush declared:

“Saddam Hussein and his weapons are a direct threat to this country, to our people, and to all free people... I believe Saddam Hussein is a threat to the American people. I believe he’s a threat to the neighborhood in which he lives. And I’ve got good evidence to believe that. He has weapons of mass destruction... The American people know that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction.”

These claims were untrue. As the world now knows, Iraq had no dangerous “weapons of mass destruction,” and posed no threat to the US. Moreover, alarmist suggestions that the Baghdad regime was working with the al-Qaeda terror network likewise proved to be without foundation.

So if the official reasons given for the war were untrue, why did the United States attack?

Whatever the secondary reasons for the war, the crucial factor in President Bush's decision to attack was to help Israel. With support from Israel and America's Jewish-Zionist lobby, and prodded by Jewish "neo-conservatives" holding high-level positions in his administration, President Bush – who was already fervently committed to Israel – resolved to invade and subdue one of Israel's chief regional enemies.

This is so widely understood in Washington that US Senator Ernest Hollings was moved in May 2004 to acknowledge that the US invaded Iraq "to secure Israel," and "everybody" knows it. He also identified three of the influential pro-Israel Jews in Washington who played an important role in prodding the US into war: Richard Perle, chair of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board; Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Defense Secretary; and Charles Krauthammer, columnist and author. ¹

Hollings referred to the cowardly reluctance of his Congressional colleagues to acknowledge this truth openly, saying that "nobody is willing to stand up and say what is going on." Due to "the pressures we get politically," he added, members of Congress uncritically support Israel and its policies.

Some months before the invasion, retired four-star US Army General and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Wesley Clark acknowledged in an interview: "Those who favor this attack [by the US against Iraq] now will tell you candidly, and privately, that it is probably true that Saddam Hussein is no threat to the United States. But they are afraid at some point he might decide if he had a nuclear weapon to use it against Israel." ²

Six months before the attack, President Bush met in the White House with eleven members of the US House of Representatives. While the "war against terrorism is going okay," he told the lawmakers, the United States would soon have to deal with a greater danger: "The biggest threat, however, is Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction. He can blow up Israel and that would trigger an international conflict." ³

Bush also spoke candidly about why the US was going to war during a White House meeting on Feb.

27, 2003, just three weeks before the invasion. In a talk with Elie Wiesel, the well-known Jewish writer, Bush said: “If we don’t disarm Saddam Hussein, he will put a weapon of mass destruction on Israel and they will do what they think they have to do, and we have to avoid that.” ⁴

Fervently Pro-Israel

President Bush’s fervent support for Israel and its hardline government is well known. He reaffirmed it, for example, in June 2002 in a major speech on the Middle East. In the view of “leading Israeli commentators,” the London *Times* reported, the address was “so pro-Israel that it might have been written by [Israel prime minister] Ariel Sharon.” ⁵ In an address to pro-Israel activists at the 2004 convention of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Bush said: “The United States is strongly committed, and I am strongly committed, to the security of Israel as a vibrant Jewish state.” He also told the gathering: “By defending the freedom and prosperity and security of Israel, you’re also serving the cause of America.” ⁶

Condoleeza Rice, who served as President Bush’s National Security Advisor, and later, as his Secretary of State, echoed the President’s outlook in a May 2003 interview, saying that the “security of Israel is the key to security of the world.” ⁷

Long Range Plans

Jewish-Zionist plans for war against Iraq had been in place for years.

In mid-1996, a policy paper prepared for then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu outlined a grand strategy for Israel in the Middle East. Entitled “A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm,” it was written under the auspices of an Israeli think tank, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies. Specifically, it called for an “effort [that] can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right...” ⁸

The authors of “A Clean Break” included Rich-

ard Perle, Douglas Feith, and David Wurmser, three influential Jews who later held high-level positions in the Bush administration, 2001-2004: Perle as chair of the Defense Policy Board, Feith as Undersecretary of Defense, and Wurmser as special assistant to the Undersecretary of State for Arms Control.

The role played by Bush administration officials who are associated with two major pro-Zionist “neoconservative” research centers has come under scrutiny from *The Nation*, the influential public affairs weekly.⁹

The author, Jason Vest, examined the close links between the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) and the Center for Security Policy (CSP), detailing the ties between these groups and various politicians, arms merchants, military men, wealthy pro-Israel American Jews, and Republican presidential administrations.

JINSA and CSP members, notes Vest, “have ascended to powerful government posts, where... they’ve managed to weave a number of issues – support for national missile defense, opposition to arms control treaties, championing of wasteful weapons systems, arms aid to Turkey and American unilateralism in general – into a hard line, with support for the Israeli right at its core... On no issue is the JINSA/CSP hard line more evident than in its relentless campaign for war – not just with Iraq, but ‘total war,’ as Michael Ledeen, one of the most influential JINSAns in Washington, put it... For this crew, ‘regime change’ by any means necessary in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian Authority is an urgent imperative.”

In the aftermath of the 2001 Nine-Eleven terror attacks, ardently pro-Zionist “neo-conservatives” in the Bush administration – who for years had sought a Middle East war to bolster Israel’s security in the region – exploited the tragedy to press their agenda. In this they were backed by the Israeli government, which also pressured the White House to strike Iraq.

“The [Israeli] military and political leadership yearns for war in Iraq,” reported a leading Israeli daily paper, *Haaretz*, in Feb. 2002.¹⁰ The Jerusa-

lem correspondent for the *Guardian*, the respected British daily, reported in August 2002: "Israel signalled its decision yesterday to put public pressure on President George Bush to go ahead with a military attack on Iraq, even though it believes Saddam Hussein may well retaliate by striking Israel." ¹¹

Three months before the US invasion, the well-informed Washington journalist Robert Novak reported that Israeli prime minister Sharon was telling American political leaders that "the greatest US assistance to Israel would be to overthrow Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime." Moreover, added Novak, "that view is widely shared inside the Bush administration, and is a major reason why US forces today are assembling for war." ¹²

Israel's spy agencies were a "full partner" with the US and Britain in producing greatly exaggerated prewar assessments of Iraq's ability to wage war, a former senior Israeli military intelligence official has acknowledged. Shlomo Bron, a brigadier general in the Israel army reserves, and a senior researcher at a major Israeli think tank, said that intelligence provided by Israel played a significant role in supporting the US and British case for making war. Israeli intelligence agencies, he said, "badly overestimated the Iraqi threat to Israel and reinforced the American and British belief that the weapons [of mass destruction] existed." ¹³

The role of the pro-Israel lobby in pressing for war is examined in an 81-page research paper by two prominent American scholars, John J. Mearsheimer, professor of political science at the University of Chicago, and Stephen M. Walt, professor of international affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. ¹⁴ In the paper, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," they write:

"Pressure from Israel and the [pro-Israel] Lobby was not the only factor behind the decision to attack Iraq in March 2003, but it was critical. Some Americans believe that this was a war for oil, but there is hardly any direct evidence to support this claim. Instead, the war was motivated in good part by a desire to make Israel more secure... Within the United States, the main driving force behind

the Iraq war was a small band of neoconservatives, many with close ties to Israel's Likud Party. In addition, key leaders of the Lobby's major organizations lent their voices to the campaign for war."

Important members of the pro-Israel lobby carried out what professors Mearshiemer and Walt call "an unrelenting public relations campaign to win support for invading Iraq. A key part of this campaign was the manipulation of intelligence information, so as to make Saddam look like an imminent threat."

For some Jewish leaders, the Iraq war is part of a long-range effort to install Israel-friendly regimes across the Middle East. Norman Podhoretz, a prominent Jewish writer and an ardent supporter of Israel, has been for years editor of *Commentary*, the influential Zionist monthly. In the Sept. 2002 issue he wrote:

"The regimes that richly deserve to be overthrown and replaced are not confined to the three singled-out members of the axis of evil [Iraq, Iran, North Korea]. At a minimum, the axis should extend to Syria and Lebanon and Libya, as well as 'friends' of America like the Saudi royal family and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, along with the Palestinian Authority, whether headed by Arafat or one of his henchmen."

Uri Avnery – an award-winning Israeli journalist and author, and a three-time member of Israel's parliament – sees the Iraq war as an expression of immense Jewish influence and power. In an essay written some weeks after the US invasion, he wrote: ¹⁵

"Who are the winners? They are the so-called neo-cons, or neo-conservatives. A compact group, almost all of whose members are Jewish. They hold the key positions in the Bush administration, as well as in the think-tanks that play an important role in formulating American policy and the ed-op pages of the influential newspapers... The immense influence of this largely Jewish group stems from its close alliance with the extreme right-wing Christian fundamentalists, who nowadays control Bush's Republican party... Seemingly, all this is good for Israel. America controls the world, we

control America. Never before have Jews exerted such an immense influence on the center of world power.”

In Britain, a veteran member of Britain’s House of Commons bluntly declared in May 2003 that Jews had taken control of America’s foreign policy, and had succeeded in pushing the US into war. “A Jewish cabal have taken over the government in the United States and formed an unholy alliance with fundamentalist Christians,” said Tam Dalyell, a Labour party deputy and the longest-serving House member. “There is far too much Jewish influence in the United States,” he added. ¹⁶

Summary

For many years now, American presidents of both parties have been staunchly committed to Israel and its security. This entrenched policy is an expression of the Jewish-Zionist grip on America’s political and cultural life. It was fervent support for Israel – shared by President Bush, high-ranking administration officials and nearly the entire US Congress – that proved crucial in the decision to invade and subdue one of Israel’s greatest regional enemies.

While the unprovoked US invasion of Iraq may have helped Israel, just as those who wanted and planned for the war had hoped, it has been a calamity for America and the world. It has cost tens of thousands of lives and many tens of billions of dollars. Around the world, it has generated unmatched distrust and hostility toward the US. In Arab and Muslim countries, it has fueled intense hatred of the United States, and has brought many new recruits to the ranks of anti-American terrorists.

Americans have already paid a high price for their nation’s commitment to Israel. We will pay an ever higher price – not just in dollars or international prestige, but in the lives of young men squandered for the interests of a foreign state – until the Jewish-Zionist hold on US political life is finally broken.

Notes

1. Remarks by Ernest F. Hollings, May 20, 2004. *Congressional Record - Senate*, May 20, 2004, pp. S5921-S5925. See also: "Iraq Was Invaded 'To Secure Israel,' Says Senator Hollings, And 'Everybody Knows It'."
2. *The Guardian* (London), August 20, 2002.
3. Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (Simon & Schuster, 2004), p. 186. See also p. 188.
4. Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (2004), p. 320.
5. R. Dunn, "Sharon Could Have Written Speech," *The Times* (London), June 26, 2002.
6. Bush address to AIPAC convention, Washington, DC, May 18, 2004.
7. A. S. Lewin, "Israel's Security is Key to Security of Rest of World," *Jewish Press* (Brooklyn, NY), May 14, 2003. Rice's interview with the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharnonot* is quoted.
8. James Bamford, *A Pretext for War* (Doubleday, 2004), pp. 261-269; B. Whitaker, "Playing Skittles with Saddam," *The Guardian* (Britain), Sept. 3, 2002.
9. J. Vest, "The Men From JINSA and CSP," *The Nation*, Sept. 2, 2002.
10. A. Benn, "Background: Enthusiastic IDF Awaits War in Iraq," *Haaretz*, Feb. 17, 2002. Quoted in J. J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," March 2006, p. 30, and p. 68, fn. 146.
11. Jonathan Steele, "Israel Puts Pressure on US to Strike Iraq," *The Guardian* (London), August 17, 2002.
12. Robert Novak, "Sharon's War?," column of Dec. 26, 2002.
13. L. King, "Ex-General Says Israel Inflated Iraqi Threat," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 5, 2003; See also: J. J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," March 2006, p. 29, and p. 67, fn. 142.
14. John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," March 2006, pp. 29, 30, 32. A shorter version appeared in the *London Review of Books*, March 23, 2006.
15. Uri Avnery, "The Night After," *CounterPunch*, April 10, 2003.
16. F. Nelson, "Anger Over Dalyell's 'Jewish Cabal' Slur," *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh), May 5, 2003; M. White, "Dalyell Steps Up Attack On Levy," *The Guardian* (London), May 6, 2003.

#2018 10/2006

Mark Weber is director of the Institute for Historical Review. He studied history at the University of Illinois (Chicago), the University of Munich, Portland State University and Indiana University (M.A., 1977).

This essay is distributed as a public service by the Institute for Historical Review. Founded in 1978, the IHR is recognized by the US Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, not-for-profit, educational and publishing enterprise. Donations to the IHR are tax deductible.